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RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
OF WELLS



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31 DECEMBER, 1956



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OF WELLS

ANNUAL REPORT

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MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

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RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF WELLS

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1956.

Wells, Somerset.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ended December 31st, 1956.

GENERAL STATISTICS

Area, 57,175 Acres.

Population as supplied by the Registrar General 10,170.

Number of inhabited houses on the Rate Books, 3007.

Rateable Value at 31/12/56 : £69,022.

Sum represented by a Penny Rate (1956/57) : £278.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

GEOLOGY.—Dolomitic Conglomerate at Chewton Mendip and Westbury-sub-Mendip ; Mountain Limestone at Priddy ; Red Marl at Dinder, North Wootton and Rodney Stoke ; Red Marl and River Gravel at Wookey ; Lower Lias at West Pennard, Baltonsborough and Walton ; Alluvium and Peat at Glastonbury Moor, Meare and Godney.

OCCUPATION.—Chiefly Agricultural ; Cheese and Cider Making ; Dairy Farming ; Paper Factories at Wookey and Wookey Hole ; Stone Quarrying in various parts of the District. Some of the people at Butleigh and Walton work at Shoe, Leather and Skin Factories at Street and Glastonbury. At Wookey Hole there is a factory manufacturing Electric Components, Fractional Motors and Television Equipment.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR

Births :

			Total	M.	F.	
Legitimate	164	84	80	
Illegitimate	4	3	1	
			168	87	81	Birth Rate 16.5.2

Still Births : Total 4, Legitimate 3, Illegitimate 1.

Deaths : Total 218 ; Male 95 ; Female 123.

Number of Women dying in or in consequence of Childbirth : Nil.

Deaths of Infants under one year of age : Total 11, Legitimate 11. Illegitimate Nil.

Deaths of Infants under 4 weeks of age : Total 10, Legitimate 10, Illegitimate Nil.

Death Rate of Infants : All Infants per 1,000 live births, 125.

Premature birth and debility accounted for : Nil ; Bronchitis Nil.

Deaths from Cancer (all ages), 24.

Deaths from Measles (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Pneumonia (all ages), 17.

Deaths from Cerebro-Spinal Fever (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Diphtheria (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Influenza (all ages), Nil.

Deaths from Acute Poliomyelitis, Nil.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR

Disease					Total Cases Notified	Admitted to Hospital	Deaths
Scarlet Fever	2	Nil	Nil				
Diphtheria	Nil	Nil	Nil				
Measles	22	Nil	Nil				
Puerperal pyrexia	1	Nil	Nil				
Cerebro-spinal-meningitis	Nil	Nil	Nil				
Pneumonia	5	22	17				
Whooping Cough	Nil	Nil	Nil				
Enteric Fever & Para Typhoid	Nil	Nil	Nil				
Dysentery	Nil	Nil	Nil				
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	Nil	Nil	Nil				
Acute Poliomyelitis	Nil	Nil	Nil				

TUBERCULOSIS

New Cases and Mortality during the year :

Age Periods.	NEW CASES				DEATHS			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0—5								
5—10				1				
10—15								
15—20								
20—25	3	2						
25—30								
30—35								
35—40	1	1						
40—45		1						
45—50								
50—55					1			
55—60		2						
60—70								
70—80								

Public Officers of the District :

Medical Officer of Health (part-time) : Dr. T. R. G. Melrose, F.R.C.S. (Ed.).

Chief Public Health Inspector (whole time) : S. Harkness, Cert. S.I.B., M.A.P.H.I., Royal Sanitary Institute Certificate as Inspector of Meat and other Foods. Food Hygiene Certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

Additional Public Health Inspector (whole time) : H. C. Hoyle, Cert. S.I.B., M.A.P.H.I.. Royal Sanitary Institute Certificate as Inspector of Meat and other Foods.

Water Engineer and Surveyor (whole time) : W. M. Webb, A.M.I.Mun.E.

Committees concerned with matters of Public Health : Public Health Committee : Housing Committee.

CAUSES OF SICKNESS. There were no special causes of sickness.

PROFESSIONAL NURSING. District Nurses employed by Local Associations give aid to those patients suffering from illness at home when circumstances demand nursing skill and experience beyond the capabilities of relatives. Furthermore, Health Visitors appointed by the Somerset County Council help and advise mothers on all problems connected with infant welfare. The Health Visitors also visit patients in their homes who are suffering from Tuberculosis and generally co-operate with the staff of my Department on all matters affecting the health of the community.

MIDWIVES. Lists of midwives practising in the area are kept by the County Medical Officer of Health. All births and any abnormal circumstances arising therefrom are subsequently reported by the midwives to the County Medical Officer of Health.

CLINICS. There is an Infant Welfare Centre in Wells, which is used by people residing in the Rural Area. School and Tuberculosis Clinics are provided by the County Council.

The County Tuberculosis Officer holds a clinic each week at premises situated within the Borough of Glastonbury and a considerable number of patients from the Rural Area attend for advice and treatment.

HOSPITALS AND INSTITUTIONS. The Hospitals specialising in treatment and nursing of patients suffering from tuberculosis are now controlled by the various Hospital Boards which came into being when the National Health Service was inaugurated.

The Wells Cottage Hospital, situated within Wells Municipal Borough Council's area admits patients from the Rural District. This Hospital has wards for a limited number of maternity cases also accommodation for children requiring tonsilectomy and treatment for minor complaints.

Butleigh Hospital, situated within the Rural District has an allocation of 10 beds for maternity cases and 15 for patients requiring general medical or surgical treatment. The Hospital fulfils a very useful purpose, admitting patients from the small towns of Street and Glastonbury, moreover it serves the surrounding agricultural district comprising some sixty to seventy villages.

No institution for unmarried mothers, illegitimate children and homeless children exists in the District. Cases arising in each respective group mentioned requiring assistance are the primary concern of the Somerset County Council.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES (Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria, etc.). Any case of infectious disease which cannot for one reason or another be nursed at home is usually isolated at the Ham Green Hospital in Bristol. Transport for the patient is arranged from this Hospital on notification by the attending Doctor or Public Health Department.

The Public Health Laboratory situated at Taunton, assists in the diagnosis of Diphtheria and Cerebro-Spinal-Meningitis by examining and reporting on specimens submitted. In addition Anti-Toxin for the treatment of Diphtheria is supplied by the District Council to the Doctors practising in the District when required.

DISINFECTION. After infectious disease this is carried out by the Public Health Inspector with the use of spraying apparatus on the lines recommended by the County Medical Officer of Health. All disinfectants are supplied free by the Council.

LABORATORY WORK. Samples of food and water are submitted to the Somerset County Council Laboratory at Taunton for chemical analysis and those requiring bacteriological examination to the Public Health Laboratory Service who also have premises in this town.

ERADICATION OF BED BUGS. There have been no complaints and inspections during the year have revealed no bed bugs.

VENEREAL DISEASE. From the available evidence it would appear that the area is remarkably free from this disease.

SEWERAGE.

The Wookey village sewerage and sewage disposal scheme was completed in 1952. The Council have erected a large number of houses throughout their district since the war and in this particular village the figure will soon exceed 100.

All the Council houses have modern drainage systems which discharge into the public sewers. In addition several of the older houses in the village have been improved and provided with drainage systems which discharge in a similar manner.

Generally speaking the sewers are 6in. in diameter and the system was designed to enable the greatest number of house connections to be made as economically as possible. The sewage gravitates to an ejector station and is pumped to the disposal works which are situated about a mile from the village. The works in question consist of screening chambers, detritus channels, sedimentation tanks, filter beds, humus tanks and sludge beds. Finally the effluent from the works is discharged into the River Axe.

A scheme from which the greater part of the village of Walton will benefit was approved by the Minister of Housing and Local Government during 1954 and it was anticipated that the work would be commenced during 1955. Unfortunately difficulties arose which necessitated protracted negotiations. Fortunately these were overcome during 1956 and it became clear towards the end of the year that the work could commence on the 1st January, 1957.

The scheme submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in respect of the main part of the village of Meare was approved during 1955 but a starting date for the work has not yet been determined.

Other village schemes have been prepared or are in course of preparation and it is to be hoped that these can be constructed before further housing development takes place.

WATER SUPPLY.

Work on the Comprehensive Water Scheme continued during the year. The construction of a permanent pump-house commenced at Priddy in March 1953, was completed in 1955 and the necessary chlorinating apparatus installed.

It has previously been reported that efforts were being made to supplement the water resources of the district in order to meet the possible future demands of other local authorities interested in the scheme. Water-works owned by the Church Commissioners were acquired by the Council during 1955. The works consist of a reservoir having a capacity of 30,000 gallons situated at East Water, Priddy, together with mains supplying properties at Green Ore and Priddy. Since acquiring the works in question the Council have connected the reservoir with their mains.

Baltonsborough. Each inhabited house has a supply laid on. The water is supplied in bulk from the Shepton Mallet R.D.C. A reservoir of 25,000 gals. capacity is situated on Windmill Hill with a top water level of O.D. + 190.

Water is also brought to this village by a link main from West Pennard.

The delivery of water during the summer months has in the past been restricted and to meet the deficiencies the Council provided a pump and chlorinating plant to extract water from the river. After treatment the river water was pumped up to the reservoir and tests have proved the quality to be satisfactory. Fortunately it was not necessary to use river water during the past year and the Shepton Mallet R.D.C. as a result of their new scheme are now in a position to satisfy the present needs of the village.

BUTLEIGH.

About 42 of the 168 houses have a water supply laid on from what is locally known as the Estate Supply. About 30 rely on standpipes and the remainder on private wells. The Estate supply is derived from surface springs and storage of 500,000 gallons or more is provided in a series of reservoirs. The quality of the water is variable and there have been many occasions when it has been highly polluted. The supply at present is far from sufficient for the needs of the village and during any dry periods great conservancy has to be practised.

The Bridgwater, Minehead and Butleigh Group Hospital Management Committee control a hospital situated in this village. The water supply is derived from a private borehole but unfortunately the water varies in quality, consequently much supervision has been necessary in the past. The Management Committee finally decided to instal filtering and chlorinating apparatus and as a consequence there has been a marked improvement in the quality of the water.

CHEWTON MENDIP.

Approximately 91 out of 174 properties are supplied from the Estate Supply or from Shepton Mallet. Of the remainder 44 have supplies available within 100 yards. The other properties are generally outlying and have to rely on wells or rainwater tanks. The Waldegrave Estate Company's private water supply is dependent on surface springs and a borehole. In the past this supply has been subject to intermittent pollution but the Estate Company have installed chlorinating apparatus at Stoney Path Reservoir and Butterwells. The water has therefore been considerably improved in quality.

OUT ST. CUTHBERT.

East and West Horrington.

A spring supply piped to a 10,000 gallon reservoir at 656 O.D. provides water for these two villages. The water is of good quality and all needs have been met up to the present. Some 68 out of 123 houses have a piped supply and the remainder have standpipes available within reasonable distance.

Coxley.

Approximately 115 houses out of 188 are now supplied with water on tap. The majority of the houses having a mains supply derive their water from two boreholes owned by the Council and the others from installations under the control of the Church Commissioners.

Burcott.

71 houses either without water or relying on their own wells.

Easton.

This village has a main water supply. 44 of the 73 houses are connected to the Council's mains and 24 rely on standpipes.

The public wells which served the village for so many years have been closed.

Wookey Hole, Elm Close and Haybridge.

These groups of houses are supplied by Wells City who are the Statutory Water Undertakers. Most houses have piped supplies of good quality water in adequate supply.

Dulcote.

Some 44 houses of which 31 have a piped supply derived from a small private water system installed many years ago. There are no complaints of shortage and the cottages without piped supplies have water available within easy reach.

Chilcote, Worminster, Milton and Walcombe.

These small groups of houses have piped supplies from various sources. Their needs appear to have been met, and they do not form part of the Regional Scheme.

DINDER.

39 out of 61 houses have piped supplies from the Estate Supply. This water is derived from springs which rise near Masbury Ring. The remainder of the houses are not within reach of the mains and have to rely on wells, etc., for their water. The Estate Water is of good quality and appears to be sufficient for present requirements.

GODNEY.

51 out of 73 houses have piped supplies from the Street U.D.C. main which runs through the village. The supply is of good quality and there is no shortage at any time. The remainder of the houses have to rely on private supply as they are not in compact groups or within easy reach of the trunk main.

Meare.

Water mains having been laid to the greater part of this parish has made it possible for 165 of the 274 houses to have a piped supply and approximately 30 others are served by standpipe.

The village is supplied with water under normal pressure as the Meare water tower which rises some 83 feet above the ground and has a capacity of 125,000 gallons is in use.

NORTH WOOTTON.

64 out of 78 houses have piped water of good quality and unlimited quantity. The remainder of the houses are not within easy reach of the mains but in at least three of these cases they are likely to lay on water at an early date. The water is derived from two boreholes, each fitted with an electric pump. There is a reservoir of 30,000 gallons capacity at 155 O.D. One electric pump is controlled by float switch and provides water for the Parish—the other pump is manually controlled and delivers water into the chlorinating plant of the Glastonbury Corporation which is within 100 yards of our plant. The water so delivered is taken back by this Council at West Pennard for use in that Parish.

PRIDDY.

51 of the 96 houses have piped supplies. The majority of this number are supplied from the Council's mains but there are still a few obtaining water from an agricultural system installed by the Church Commissioners, and recently acquired by the Council. The District Council purchases water in bulk at some of the remote parts of the village and distribute to the nearby cottages.

A small part of the population hauls water from the Council's supply at Priddy Green. This water is of excellent quality and of such sufficiency that it forms the major source of the Council's Regional Water Supply Scheme.

RODNEY STOKE.

There are 230 houses in this Parish. 41 are supplied by Street U.D.C. under their Water Act which empowers them to supply as many as can be fed by gravity from their trunk main ; and 150 other houses are supplied from this Council's new main.

SHARPHAM.

8 houses out of 28 have piped supplies. The remainder are not within easy reach of the main and have to haul water from one of two standpipes which have been provided. The source of the water is the Street U.D.C. main. Wells R.D.C. purchase in bulk. Quality and quantity satisfactory.

WALTON.

There are 177 houses, and all except the outlying ones now have water on tap. Total connected is 149. The source of the water is again the Street U.D.C. main.

WESTBURY.

49 out of 173 houses have piped supplies—these are of a private nature and mainly from an agricultural scheme installed by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners some years ago. A further 88 houses now have piped water supplies from the Council's mains.

WEST PENNARD.

175 out of 196 houses have piped supplies. The remainder have either a standpipe within easy reach or have private supplies. There is a 30,000 gallon reservoir at Sticklynch, and water is purchased in bulk from the Glastonbury Corporation. When shortages were encountered it became necessary to provide Glastonbury Corporation with water at North Wootton (see note above) and during the dry season it is now possible to pump into the main at North Wootton as much water as is required to be extracted at West Pennard. The arrangement is very satisfactory to both Councils.

WOOKEY.

A rather scattered Parish comprising Wookey, Yarley, Henton and Bleadney. The Ecclesiastical Parish of Wookey itself now has water mains available to most houses. The complete Civil Parish comprises 278 houses of which 118 now have piped water.

THE MENDIP HOSPITAL.

This large Institution which houses well over 1,000 persons has its own water supply. The main source is two boreholes situate between Bristol Road and Watchet's Spring which provides the water for East and West Horrington. These boreholes are in the old red sandstone formation, and yield insufficient water for the very large demands of such an institution and the farms run in connection therewith.

The Hospital is within the statutory supply area of the City of Wells and during 1952 a main was laid from Bath Road, Wells, to Knapp Hill Farm, which is owned by the Hospital Board. A pump is installed at this farm and the water raised to the Hospital Reservoir. After a certain quantity of water is used the pump referred to is automatically started and the reservoir re-filled.

PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR'S REPORT

The following is a summary of the inspections made during the year :—

Infectious dwellings : Occupiers served with notice as to isolation of patients and disinfection	2
Disinfectants supplied by the Council	5
Dwellings and clothing disinfected as directed by the Medical Officer of Health	3
Nuisances arising from foul and choked drains, foul accumulations, etc.	39
Samples of drinking water sent to the County Laboratory for chemical analysis	7
Samples of drinking water sent to the Public Health Laboratory for bacteriological examination	44
Premises licensed under the Petroleum Acts for the storage of petrol	48
Premises licensed under the Petroleum Acts for the storage of carbide of calcium	Nil
Visits re water supplies	76
Bakehouses (3), Slaughterhouses (6), inspected	59
Public Schools inspected	18
Visits to dairies	20
Visits re food inspection	406
Other inspections under Housing Acts	425
Visits re rats	454
Visits re refuse collection	35
Inspections of Ice Cream premises	26
Caravans	28

REFUSE COLLECTION.

At the beginning of October 1956, the Council, because of public demand introduced a system of collecting refuse fortnightly instead of monthly and it was decided that ashes, formerly excluded, would be collected in addition to other unburnable refuse.

The refuse collection work is let under contract. The Council have however insisted that the vehicle used for the work must be properly constructed for the purpose.

The Council own no refuse tips but have a very advantageous arrangement with a local quarry owner who allows the tipping of refuse on his land and covers it with quarry waste free of charge.

FACORIES ACT, 1937

1.—INSPECTIONS for purpose of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Public Health Inspectors).

Premises (1)	Number on Register (2)	Number of		
		Inspections (3)	Written notices (4)	Occupiers prosecuted (5)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by local Authorities	16	5	Nil	Nil
(ii) Factories not included in (i) to which Section 7 applies				
(a) Subject to the Local Authorities (Transfer of Enforcement) Order, 1938	26	15	Nil	Nil
(b) Others	9	9	Nil	Nil
(iii) Other Premises under the Act (excluding out-workers' premises)				
TOTAL	51	29	Nil	Nil

DEFECTS. Insufficient Sanitary Accommodation in one instance—remedied on informal action.

OUTWORKERS. There are 95 outworkers in the district (all wearing apparel).

ICE CREAM.

No premises are licensed for the manufacture of ice cream, but 39 shops are registered for the sale of this product.

SLAUGHTERHOUSES.

Under the Livestock (Restrictions of Slaughtering) Order 1940, all the slaughterhouses in the Rural Area were automatically closed on the 12th January 1940 and a further Order made by the Minister of Food in 1947 continued the prohibition of the use of such premises. The Livestock (Restriction on Slaughtering) (Amendment and Revocation) Order 1954, revoked all previous Orders and removed from the 2nd July that year all restrictions on the slaughtering of livestock. As a consequence and in order to meet the needs of the District six private slaughterhouses were licensed.

The whole of the meat produced in the licensed slaughterhouses has been inspected and the details regarding numbers of animals slaughtered and meat condemned are given hereunder.

Period 1st January 1956-31st December, 1956.

Carcases and Offal inspected and condemned in whole or in part during year ;—

	Cattle exclud- ing Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs	Horses
Number killed	193	2	2173	784	422	—
Number inspected	193	2	2173	784	422	—
All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci ;						
Whole carcases condemned	—	—	5	—	—	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	3	—	5	9	6	—
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis and cysticerci	1%	—	.05%	1%	1.5%	—
Tuberculosis only ; Whole carcases condemned	—	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	3	1	—	—	2	—
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	1%	50%	—	—	.5%	—
Cysticereosis ; Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	—	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigeration	—	—	—	—	—	—
Generalised and totally condemned						
Weight of meat condemned (in lbs.) for :—						
(a) Tuberculosis	110	75	—	—	15	—
(b) Cysticercosis	—	—	—	—	—	—
(c) Other	95	—	260	45	40	—
Total (in lbs.) condemned	205	75	260	45	55	—

FOOD INSPECTION.

Inspection of food at shops and stores is carried out regularly and small quantities have been condemned as found necessary. Model bye laws with regard to the sale of food were adopted by the Council on August 28th, 1950.

Copies of a leaflet containing a summary of the Food Hygiene Regulations 1955 together with an explanatory letter were sent to all food traders concerned. Subsequent inspections and interviews have confirmed that traders are most anxious to accept their responsibilities under the Regulations.

No special difficulty has been encountered regarding the disposal of unsound food which is either burnt, buried or fed to animals. The latter, however, is only permitted after ensuring that the food will receive such treatment as may be necessary to render it safe for this purpose.

MILK AND DAIRIES ORDERS.

On October 1st, 1949 the control of milk producing premises (with the exception of water supplies and drainage) passed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Local control generally speaking now only applies to the Retailing of Milk and the details regarding the numbers of Purveyors of milk and licences issued are as follows :—

No. of Purveyors of Milk—53.

This figure includes 40 Producer Retailers whose sales of milk are relatively small.

Milk (Special Designation) (Raw Milk) Regulations 1949-1954.

No. of Dealers licences authorising the use of the Special Designation Tuberculin Tested—4.

No. of Supplementary licences authorising the use of the Special Designation Tuberculin Tested—5.

Milk (Special Designation) (Pasteurised and Sterilised Milk) Regulations 1949-1954.

No. of Dealers licences authorising the use of the Special Designation Pasteurised—2.

No. of Supplementary licences authorising the use of the Special Designation Pasteurised—4.

I have the honour to be, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

T. R. G. MELROSE,

Medical Officer of Health.

Printed by
CLARE, SON & CO., LTD.
Wells (Somerset) and London